

VZCZCXYZ0009
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQ #0420/01 0541939
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 231939Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6385
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMFIS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 6456
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ FEB LIMA 1428
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2383
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 1934

UNCLAS QUITO 000420

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [EC](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#)

SUBJECT: International Conference for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases to Be Held in Ecuador, March 5-9

¶1. The International No Bases Network (INBN) will hold an International Conference for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases in Ecuador, March 5-9, 2007. They expect some 2,000 activists to attend the conference, which will be held in Quito March 5-7, with a March 8 caravan from Quito to Manta, site of the U.S. military's Forward Operating Location (FOL). The March 8 events, keyed to International Women's Day, will include a media day followed by a demonstration in Manta on March 9. The organizers, which include several prominent U.S. NGOs, have begun to brief the Ecuadorian and international media of their plans for the conference. They claim that President Rafael Correa and Defense Minister Lorena Escudero will speak at the conference in Quito, and that the mayor of Quito will hold a special session for the attendees. The Embassy is taking proactive steps to counter the conference's anti-U.S. base and anti-U.S. military propaganda campaign.

¶2. According to their website (no-bases.org) the aim of this international network is "the closure of foreign military bases around the world," and the conference goal is to "come up with a concrete plan of action." In a 2/22 briefing for foreign media in Quito, attended by AP, Reuters, EFE and CNN among others, INBN organizers explained their overall mission for the conference. The theme is "The U.S.'s New Global Imperialism through Military Bases," and they said that U.S. plans for a "new military incursion" in Iran make the topic more important than ever. They use two core statistics on U.S. foreign bases to make their case: The Pentagon has confirmed that there are 735 U.S. bases overseas; 96 percent of all foreign military bases worldwide are U.S. They also claim that the U.S. has more bases in Latin America than we admit because we have sworn the host countries to secrecy, and add that USG military training of foreign militaries is just as "evil" as our overseas bases.

¶3. Why Hold the Meeting in Ecuador? According to the INBN briefers, the Manta FOL has become the organization's focus because of the "Correa administration's open opposition" to the U.S. presence in Ecuador (note: Correa has not called for U.S. withdrawal but has made clear his opposition to renewing the current bilateral agreement that expires in 2009. end note). Manta's strategic importance for the USG means that if they can successfully "throw the U.S. out" of Manta, they will have delivered a real blow. They made a number of disinformation points in the briefing: The Manta FOL is being financed by "the Plan Colombia legislation," which proves the USG has been dishonest in its description of activities in Manta; the USG is controlling the international flow of oil through flights from the Manta FOL and the group will reveal the USG's methods; Manta is an example of a "base" situated to advance USG plans to exploit water and oil resources in the future; one of the FOL's "secret missions" is to intercept illegal immigrants in order to keep "undesired races" out of the U.S.; the USG has removed farmers from their homes around the FOL for future USG expansion

projects; child prostitution, trafficking of girls, and reports of rape and drug abuse in Manta have increased since 2000 because of the presence of U.S. soldiers. They said that Joseph Gerson of the U.S. will attend the conference and reveal his research on "secret" studies conducted by the Pentagon.

¶4. Conference Impact: The Mission expects widespread coverage of the conference by the Ecuadorian and international media, and local leftist organizations will undoubtedly seek to maximize its impact. Last year the GOE published a foreign policy document stating that there should be "no foreign troops on Ecuadorian soil", and it is widely expected that efforts will be made to write this policy into the new constitution slated to result from the constitutional assembly that Correa seeks to convene later this year.

¶5. Embassy Action Pre-Conference: The Ecuadorian public outside of Manta has limited awareness and largely inaccurate information about the FOL. To fill that information gap and create a positive environment for continued counter-narcotics cooperation at the FOL through 2009, as well as - in the best case scenario - a realistic opportunity to engage the GOE on renewal of the agreement, the Embassy over the past two months has begun public diplomacy efforts to explain the benefits of the FOL to the local economy and its contribution to protecting Ecuador's sovereignty from the scourge of transnational narcotics activity. In private meetings, and using TV, radio and print media, the Ambassador and other Mission spokespersons have been countering misinformation published in the local media, explaining what the FOL is and is not, and outlining how bilateral counter narcotics cooperation is good for both countries. At the same time, we have sought to de-politicize and put the question of post-2009 renewal into the future, saying only that we will respect Ecuador's decision and engage the issue when the time comes to do so. We have also opened the FOL doors to numerous media outlets for reporting tours, and plan to arrange

future visits for Ecuadorian opinion shapers in order to "de-mystify" the FOL presence and mission and transparently make the case that the FOL is simply a small U.S. operation housed within an Ecuadorian airbase, with a limited-scope mission directly supportive of mutual interest.

¶5. Embassy Action During the Conference: The Mission has an aggressive communications plan to counter disinformation and provide the Ecuadorian media with the truth about the FOL. Before and during the No Base Conference, Mission spokespersons will conduct media interviews and calls on editors to discuss the benefits of the FOL and of U.S. overseas bases around the world. We will also host the visits of two national TV stations to the FOL, including one TV anchor who has been a consistent critic of the FOL, and will meet with visiting American representatives of WOLA and the AFSC. In addition, the Ambassador will be speaking to the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs about GOE participation in or association with the conference.

¶6. Embassy Action Post Conference: After the No Base Conference, the Mission will continue its campaign to inform Ecuadorian opinion shapers and the general public about the FOL and the benefits of U.S.-Ecuador counter-narcotics cooperation via private and public diplomacy, and FOL visits. We also plan to request separate funding from the Department and DOD for paid media placements to inform the public about the FOL, and for an enhanced Manta community relations campaign to increase support for the FOL in key constituencies in and around Manta.

¶7. Action Request: Mission has already requested that State/IIP draft articles on the value of U.S. bases and the U.S. global security alliances for use in this campaign. In addition, Mission requests assistance from the Department's counter-disinformation officer to refute INBN's disinformation claims discussed above.

JEWELL